

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Suspected Illegal Cannabis and Hemp Sales Can Be Reported Anonymously to Regulatory Office

OCR says residents do not need to determine whether a suspected product is hemp or cannabis before filing a complaint. Reports may be anonymous, include photos and directions, and are sent privately to enforcement officers for review and investigation.

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Residents who suspect a business or individual is illegally selling cannabis or regulated hemp products may submit an anonymous complaint through the Office of Cannabis Regulation's online portal, including photographs, directions and other information that could assist investigators.

Executive Director Joanne Moorehead told the Cannabis Advisory Board Thursday that OCR already has a consumer complaint process and does not intend to establish a separate system for intoxicating hemp.

Because the office regulates both cannabis and intoxicating hemp, residents do not need to determine which category a suspected product falls into before making a report. That determination can be made during the investigation.

Complainants may identify themselves or submit information without providing a name or other personal details. Moorehead said OCR does not require identifying information and allows supporting material to be attached.

“You can upload pictures, you can give directions, you can do whatever you'd like to do, and that goes directly privately to our enforcement team,” she said.

Moorehead said the portal is active and has already been used by members of the public. The reports are sent directly to OCR's enforcement personnel rather than being made public.

The complaints received vary, but often concern claims that a business may be selling marijuana or that a social-media post appears to advertise cannabis products.

Moorehead said people sometimes assume that products being promoted or offered for sale are marijuana when they may fall into another category. She said residents are not expected to make that distinction before submitting information.

OCR investigates every complaint it receives, but Moorehead cautioned that an allegation does not automatically establish that a violation occurred.

“Not all are founded, by the way, but we do investigate all.”

The complaint process could also be used for concerns involving intoxicating hemp or artificially derived cannabinoid products, which may not currently be sold in the territory while OCR develops its licensing and permitting system.

The office is working with the Department of Health's Environmental Health division and the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs on enforcement involving those products.